

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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"We have reason to believe, that the alarms had been excited and inflamed for the special purpose of checking the disposition of the country in favour of reform, and of calumniating the characters of those who promoted it."—Address from the FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE, 25th May, 1793.

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SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.—The long-expected Meeting for the prosecution of this great object is to take place on Monday next, the 10th of June, and, therefore, this seems to me to be a proper occasion for making some observations upon the subject.—It is one of the means used by the enemies of Reform to represent it as something *newly thought of*; something that nobody of any weight or consequence in the country ever thought of; something that has existence only in the minds of demagogues and visionaries.—I have, therefore, in this Number, inserted two documents, in which, from the present conduct of some men, one would hardly believe in the existence. I mean, the Address of the "*Friends of the People*" to the *People of Great Britain*, in 1792; and the Petition of the same Association to the House of Commons, in 1793. These documents originated with, and were put forth by, some of the men, who still make a figure in politics; for instance, the Duke of Bedford (then Lord J. Russell), Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Whitbread, Earl Grey (then Mr. Grey), Mr. Tierney, Lord Lauderdale, Sir Arthur Pigot, Mr. Dudley North, General Tarleton, Sir Ralph Milbank, and many others, amongst whom were 27 Members of Parliament, and of the other Gentlemen not in Parliament, *Sir John Throckmorton*, who is the Chairman of the Committee for calling the present Meeting, was one. And, as to the *Petition*, it was presented to the House of Commons by MR. GREY, now Earl Grey.—Let the reader, then, when he has gone through these documents, ask himself, whether the representation has been *amended since that time*; and, if he finds that it *has*, then he will, of course, be of opinion, that reform may possibly be unnecessary; but, if he finds that it *has not*, and if he thinks that the facts brought to light by *Mr. Maddocks*, on the memora-

ble 11th of May, 1809, together with the decision of the House upon the motion then made by that gentleman; if the reader thinks, that these are proofs of the contrary of amendment, then he must say, that there is more necessity of reform now, than there was in 1793; and he will, of course, have a right to ask Earl Grey, Mr. Tierney, and others, what can be the reason of their present silence upon the subject; and, indeed, how it came to pass, that they did nothing in the way of reform, *when they were in place and power*.—But, let us now go back a little and see what have been the effects, or, at least, some of the effects, of the want of reform.—For many years previous to 1792, there had been a conviction in the minds of all disinterested men, that a reform of the Commons' House of Parliament was necessary to the well-being of the nation. This had been declared, in the most solemn manner, by many of the greatest men in the kingdom. Indeed, there was scarcely a man distinguished for his superior wisdom and public spirit who had not declared it. But, in 1792, when the French Revolution had set men's minds at work, it became more evident, that something in the way of reform was necessary, in order to prevent the people of England from seeking for redress through the means of *revolution*, as the people of France had done.—The subject was, therefore, revived with great zeal and ability by the Society of Gentlemen, who took the name of "*Friends of the People*, associated for the purpose of procuring a Parliamentary Reform." At the same time, there were other Societies; the Society for Constitutional Information; the Corresponding Society; and some others, the object of the whole of which appears to have been the procuring of a reform in the Commons' House, and upon the same principles as those set forth in the *Petition of the Friends of the People*.—PITT, the Minister, who had been one of

the loudest in the cause of Reform, and who had, by that very means, gained the popularity that enabled him to retain his place as Minister in spite of the Aristocracy, was now become the enemy of that cause; and was disposed to do all that lay in his power against it. But, the cause was now more formidable than it had ever been before. The French, a people who had always been, by the English, considered as slaves, had now declared themselves *free*; they had abolished the feudal system in France, and all the artificial inequalities amongst men; they had curtailed the power of their sovereign, and, from an absolute despot, had reduced him to a first magistrate with known and determinate powers.—This was a change that could not fail to produce great effect upon the minds of Englishmen, and especially as the French, in their new constitution, had proceeded upon the principles of the English constitution, those very principles for which the Reformers had been so long contending in vain. The French people had declared, and it had become a fundamental law of France, that *no man should be taxed without his own consent*; that this consent should be given by *representatives*; and that, in the choosing of these representatives, *every man who paid taxes should have a voice*. This was the grand point, for which the Reformers in England had been so long contending; and, for which they had so long contended in vain against the Borough patronage and influence.—It was no wonder, therefore, that they hailed the French Revolution; that they applauded it; that they discovered a strong partiality for the persons engaged in it; and that they endeavoured by all the means in their power, to assist and uphold the cause of the Revolutionists in France, which cause, for a length of time, was the cause of the Reformers in England.—The ministry in England, and the whole of the Borough faction, could not fail to be alarmed at this. It was, indeed, quite clear, that one of these things must take place: 1. such a Parliamentary Reform as would satisfy the people of England; 2. A revolution like that which had taken place in France, or even of a more republican cast; or, 3. A suppression of the Reformers, which necessarily included a war against France, because while a communication with France was left open, to suppress the reformers would manifestly

be impossible.—The 3rd was adopted by PITT and his colleagues; and, of the consequences we are now tasting, and our children's children will taste.—That this was the real source of the war there can be no doubt in the mind of any man of sense, who looks back to what passed in the years 1792 and 1793. There unquestionably was, on the part of the French revolutionists, the most ardent desire to remain at peace and upon good terms with England. The proofs of this are so clear and convincing, that it is impossible for any man, capable of judging, to entertain a doubt upon the subject. They put up with slights and affronts of all sorts from our government; and did not, at last, declare war 'till after they saw that it was resolved on that they should not have peace upon any terms.

—The king of France, who was put to death in January, 1793, and who assuredly owed his death, at that time, to the conduct of those who called themselves his friends, had sent a Minister to England, and this Minister was *sent out of the country* by order of the government in that same month of January. After this it was impossible that war could be avoided. Indeed, it was, in most respects, war before; for, there was an *Alien Act* and an *Act against passing French assignats*, long previous to the sending away of the French Minister. And, in short, it was as clear as daylight, that the government of England was resolved not to be upon friendly terms with the revolutionary government of France.—And why not? Why, the reason alledged was, that, if we had peace and a free communication with France, there would be also a communication of *French principles*. This was openly avowed; and, not only in newspapers and pamphlets, but in speeches in parliament, the war was asserted to be absolutely necessary upon this ground. Upon this ground the war was justified; and, indeed, every act of the government, whether affecting the liberty of speech and the press, or liberty in any other way, was defended upon this same ground: that is to say, as being absolutely necessary *to keep out French principles*.—What need was there so to dread these French principles? Were they so amiable? Were they so very bewitching? What should induce Englishmen to run so eagerly after these French principles? After principles taught by a nation whom the English had always despised? If I am

told that the principles were absurd and yet dangerous, that is no answer to my question; nor does it render the question less necessary; for, the more absurd the principles, the greater must be the wonder, that the people of England should have been so enamoured of them. And, if I am told, that it was only a small and contemptible part of the people of England who were enamoured of these principles, I ask how it then came to be necessary to enter into a war to keep out these principles?—The truth is, that the French revolution had awakened the cause of Reform in England; the boldness of the French Revolutionists offered an example to the Reformers in England, and their success held out the strongest encouragement. The communication which took place between the English Reformers and the National assemblies of France, while it failed not to urge on the former to new efforts, clearly showed that nothing but a war with France could prevent reform or a revolution in England. This communication was direct, open, and without the smallest disguise, and the parties spoke in a language that no one could misunderstand; but, if a reform had been granted in England, there does not appear the smallest reason to suppose that any danger to the kingly office here would have arisen from a communication with France.—But, it was resolved not to grant this reform; and, in order to put its advocates to silence, a war against France was necessary. To enter upon this war, however, without plausible grounds, was not advisable. It was expected, indeed, to be a sort of holiday war; a sort of jubilee campaign or two; but, it might possibly be otherwise; and, as the people in general were very averse from war, it required some time to prepare them for it, and also some favouring events.—When, therefore, the Reformers began to appear in considerable strength, and it was seen that their addresses and other publications produced great effect in the minds of the people, a cry was set up, on the other side, against *Republicans* and *Levellers*, who aimed at the destruction of *Liberty* and *Property*, under the pretence of seeking for A REFORM IN PARLIAMENT. PAINE, whose powerful pen was converting millions to his principles, was prosecuted as a libeller and out-lawed; and, such dread had his writings inspired, that in May 1792, a PROCLAMATION was issued, which had the suppression of those writings particularly, if

not solely, in view. Hundreds of writers had appeared against him; but, though all these asserted, that they had truth on their side, their writings were unavailing; the people were so perverse as still to read Paine, and, notwithstanding that it was asserted, that he was a contemptible wretch, and his works full of gross falsehoods and ignorance, it was thought safest to prohibit the reading of them, and to leave the people at full liberty to read the writings of his answerers. This was thought safest, and, therefore, this course was adopted.—But, there was a something in this proceeding that did not contribute much towards the producing of conviction that PAINE was wrong; and especially as it was remembered, that the controversy did not originate with him, but with his opponent, BURKE, who had, without any apparent provocation, written and published a severe attack upon the French Revolution, and all those who had taken a share in it. In answer to this attack, PAINE wrote his famous work, the “RIGHTS OF MAN;” and, BURKE replied, from his seat in the House of Commons, where he recommended his Antagonist to the care of the Attorney General, who was then Sir JOHN SCOTT, now lord Eldon, and who answered Paine in an eloquent and convincing little publication, called an INFORMATION EX-OFFICIO, to which the latter did not choose to stay to offer a rejoinder. PAINE went to France, and here was a striking instance of what was apprehended; namely, that while the communication with France was open, it would be impossible to put a stop to, or to check, the propagation of opinions dangerous to the system in England.—The proceedings in France favoured the views of the Anti-Jacobins in England (for that was the name that the enemies of reform afterwards assumed;) the King, who had become suspected and odious from the conduct of those who professed to be fighting for him against the people or part of the people in France, and especially from the menaces of the Duke of Brunswick, was dethroned in August 1792, and put to death in the next January, the nation having, in the interim, been declared a Republic. This was held to be a confirmation of the charge against the reformers; and, as great alarm had been excited in the country, amongst weak minded people, who are always the most numerous, to speak any longer of reform was to speak of republicanism, and to wish for the overthrow of all order, law, rank, and property.—

The industry that was made use of to raise this *alarm* is incredible. The people were told all sorts of stories. Plots and conspiracies were talked of. In some parts of the country it was believed, that the Levellers were actually upon the eve of coming into the towns and villages to divide the property of the rich amongst the poor. The people were induced to arm and accoutre themselves. And all this from no other earthly cause than the dread which the Anti-Jacobins had of a *Reform of Parliament*, that very reform, which Pitt himself had asserted to be absolutely necessary to the *very existence of the nation as an independent state*, an assertion the truth or falsehood of which we are now in a fair way of seeing ascertained and proved to the whole world; for those are weak politicians indeed, who imagine that the "*Victories*" which we are now gaining in the Peninsula have any *tendency* at all to decide the contest between France and us.

—Here we are, then, at the end of *an eighteen years war*! Here we are, with six hundred millions added to our national Debt; with the annual interest of that Debt swelled from *nine millions to thirty-five millions*; with our taxes augmented from *fifteen millions to seventy millions*; with our *gold and silver* converted into *paper*, which paper has, even in the House of Commons, been declared to be worth no more than *fifteen shillings and ten pence* in the pound; with our paupers trippled in number, and with a commerce and with manufactories said to be perishing.—

Here we are, then: such is our state at the end of an eighteen years war against Republicans, Jacobins, Levellers, and Reformers of all sorts and sizes.—I pass over the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus Act* for so many years, the trials of Mr. TOOKE and others for *high treason*, all the restraints upon the *press* and upon the use of *speech*; these I pass over; these the Anti-jacobin will look upon as a great blessing; but, will he say the same of the *income tax*? If he has place, or pension, or any means whereby he gets a share of the taxes, he will; because he, in fact, by such means, gains instead of losing; but, if he be a *fool* Anti-jacobin; a gull Anti-jacobin; then the ten per cent. taken from his income will have some weight with him; and, if it has, I beg him to bear in mind, that the income tax was an invention of PITT, and that it arose out of the war waged against the Jacobins and Levellers.—The "*Friends of the People*,"

after they had presented their petition to the House of Commons, in May, 1793, published an address to the nation, in which was contained the passage taken for my motto; and, there can be no doubt at all, that the *alarm*, at that time existing in the country, had been excited and inflamed for the purpose of *checking the progress of reform* and *calumniating the characters of its promoters*. I shall be told, perhaps, that this was a very *laudable* purpose; for, that, if a parliamentary reform had taken place, it would have *ruined the country*. But, how is the country now? What state has it been placed in by the *refusal of reform*? Is it now in a *good* situation? Is it happy and safe? Are there no apprehensions for its security against enemies of any sort?—Reader, when do you read a debate; when do you read a trial for libel; when do you read about any measure of war expenditure, without seeing it stated, that we are now *contending for our very existence as a nation*? Everlastingly are we told of the *crisis* in which we are; the *crisis of our fate*; our *awful situation*. This is the language we continually hear. Well, then, this is the situation, in which we have been placed by the war. New laws of treason; laws about *sedition*; laws upon laws laying restraints upon the press. Ask the cause. Oh! they are *necessary* in these *critical* times for the *safety* of the country. Complain of the enormous load of taxes. They are *necessary* to the *safety* of the country. Why, if this be true, then, the state of England is changed since this war began. The war against Jacobins and Levellers has not insured its safety. It is not pretended that the Jacobins and Levellers have any power. They never had any in England, except with their tongues and pens; and, in France, they have been totally destroyed by "*Regular Government and Social Order*." What, then, are you afraid of? Why not do away the laws intended for the *crisis*? Why, sure, you are *safe* now? Who, or what, is it that you fear *now*? What is it, in short, that makes the *crisis*? —Very much puzzled would any Anti-jacobin be to answer me these questions. He has seen the Jacobins and Levellers overthrown and destroyed, and yet he is as much afraid as ever.—I shall be told, perhaps, that whatever the situation of the country may be, it is *better* than it would have been if *reform of parliament* had been granted in 1793. To be sure, it is not possible to say precisely what would

have been the situation of the country if reform had been granted in 1793; but, it is fair to presume, I think, that a course the contrary of that which has been pursued would have produced contrary effects, or, at least, that it might have done so. What *worse* could have happened than that which has happened, it would, I think, puzzle any man to imagine. Where is there a Prince in Europe, formerly our ally, who could have *lost more* or suffered greater disgrace, than every Prince in Europe, our ally, has lost and suffered? How could the *Reformers*, if they had obtained their ends, have put Europe more completely into the hands of France than it now is? Could they have laid more or heavier taxes upon the people of England? Could they have cut out prettier work for the Bullion Committee? Could they have made gold and silver more scarce?—I shall be told, perhaps, that they would have done worse than all this, for that they would have delivered up the country to the enemy.—It is useless to oppose assertion by assertion, or, I would say, that they would not have done it. But, *why* is it to be *supposed* that they would have done this? Where is the *reason* for it? The very worst that was said of them was, that they resembled the Jacobins and Levellers of France; and, the Jacobins and Levellers of France did not *give up their country* to the enemy, though the Princes of the blood royal, the nobility, the generals, and the admirals, all went off and left them to defend the country themselves, without army, without navy, without government, and without law. In this state they did a great many foolish and horrid acts; but they did not *give up their country to the enemy*; but, on the contrary, they met their scores of enemies almost with their bare breasts, they resisted, they overcame, they subdued, and they finally conquered those enemies. Numerous were their follies and their crimes; but never did they, for one moment, let fall a word that seemed to say it was possible for them to *give up their country to the enemy*. So, then, if the charge against the Reformers was true, that they were like the Jacobins and Levellers of France, and would act like them, it follows, of course, that they would have defended England in case of her being attacked; that they would have subdued those who had dared to attack her; and that they would have raised the glory of their country far higher than it ever was

before.—But, in talking about *giving up the country to the enemy*, we have forgotten there might, in the case of reform, have been *no enemy* to give the country up to. If a reform had taken place the reformers would, of course, have been contented, and, consequently, would have wanted *no enemy* to subdue their country. “Aye, “but, give them an inch and they will “take an ell. They would not have “stopped with a reform of parliament. “They would have had a *republic*.”—I do not believe this; but, suppose it to be true, it makes nothing for the argument; for, having formed their country into a republic there would have been the less reason for their being at war with the republicans of France. Indeed, upon that supposition, it is downright absurdity to talk of an enemy, seeing that there would not have been the smallest chance of war; and, if a war had, under such circumstances, taken place, it is impossible to conceive a motive for giving the country up to the enemy; for, more than a *republic* the reformers could not have got.—But, though this should be conceded to me, it may be said, that, if the reformers had got power, they would have *taken the property from the rich and given it to the poor*, as was done in France.—It is strange what notions people imbibe upon this score for the want of a little reflection; for, it requires but a very little indeed to convince them, that this is what never can be done. In the first place for men in power to wish to do this there is no reason whatever; there is no motive for it; and, if it were done, it would answer no *levelling* purpose; because the poor would merely change places with the rich. It is *possible*, indeed, to take the large estates and parcel them out in the way of donations to the people at large; but, if this were practicable, and if it had been done by the Reformers, that, at any rate, would not have *ruined* the people, and the *common people* would have had no reason to complain. Such an idea is, however, most grossly absurd. It is what was never attempted by the wildest of republicans. In France they seized upon the *royal domains* and upon the *estates of the Church* and of the *Emigrant Nobility*, who were at war against France; they seized upon these and sold them; but, those who remained in France continued and still continue to possess their property. And, if this was the case in France, during so terrible a convulsion as there took place,

what ground is there to suppose, that the reformers in England, if they had obtained power, would have acted *worse*, and especially if you reflect, that they would have had nothing to annoy and provoke them?—Those who have an interest in preventing a reform in the parliament always affect to look upon the reformers as men who *have nothing*. It is false; but, for argument's sake, let it be so; and then point me out an instance where they have *rejected* the co-operation of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom. Point me out an instance, where they have failed to demonstrate their pleasure at seeing such persons engaged in the cause. Point me out an instance where they have failed to show their gratitude to the full extent for any aid that they have received from such persons. And, surely, if wisdom were the guide of the noblemen and gentlemen of England, they would put themselves at the *head* of the reformers. The thing would, then, soon be done, and where would, in that case, be the danger to property?—This would be the natural course of things. All would then be in their proper place. Nothing need be destroyed or impaired but that which is an injury and a dishonour to the nation. The people, if they were to obtain a reform of parliament, would, notwithstanding all that has passed, never complain of their hardships. They would tug heartily on to the end of the war; and, an *end* to the war there would then be; but, now, who can say, that he sees the *possibility* of putting an end to the war? Our internal state is known full as well to our enemy as it is to ourselves. This great cause of the people of England is as well understood by him as by any of us; and, while it remains unsuccessful, he will, I am convinced, never again be disposed for peace. It is not a battle or fifty battles, in Spain and Portugal, that will put an end to this war. Such battles, even suppose them to terminate in *real* victories, have not, and will never have, the smallest influence upon the contest in general. Napoleon is now at war for the soil of England and Ireland; and, when such is his object, of what import are the battles of Almeida and of Badajoz? A fifth or a sixth part of his army is sent to give employment to the whole of the force that we can spare from our shores. Leopards are destroyed by hanging kettles of food upon the lower limbs of trees, at which they keep jumping 'till they

drop down exhausted, when the shepherds run in and end them with their clubs. The building of one French ship at Antwerp, or any where else in the ports of the French empire, is of more consequence to Napoleon than ten battles in Spain. *Time* is always working for him, and against us. The people of his empire have no fears to distract them; they are in no *crisis*; they are in perfect safety; his affairs do not press; every day his situation is improving; the longer the war in the peninsula the better for him.—Is this our state? It is notoriously the contrary. When Mr. BARING speaks of the necessity of contracting our expenditure, he does not say *how* it is to be done. It is to be done by diminishing the *paid* force, and by putting arms into the hands of all the people, and by relieving the government from the necessity of yielding to greedy demands. In this way, and in this way only, is a reduction in the Expenditure to take place, and whether this mode of retrenchment can be adopted without a Parliamentary Reform I leave the reader to judge. —A reform in the Commons House of Parliament is as much the cause of the king and his family as it is the cause of the people. They are all alike interested in it; and, I trust, it is not too much to hope, that his Royal Highness, the Prince, who has never yet shewn himself an enemy to it, will, whenever the occasion offers, shew himself to be its most cordial, as he may be its most powerful, friend.

WM. COBBETT.

State Prison, Newgate, Tuesday,
4th June, 1811.

From the Friends of the People,
26th April, 1811.

ADDRESS TO

THE PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

No man, who is not ready to express his concurrence in our principles, by signing the Declaration, can be admitted into our Society. The objects of it, as we conceive, are of a nature at all times fit to be pursued and recommended to the country. At different periods they have heretofore been avowed and supported by the highest authorities in this kingdom:—by eminent individuals, and considerable bodies of men; by Mr. Locke and Judge Blackstone; by the late Earl of Chatham and Sir George Saville; by the Duke of Richmond, the Marquis of Lansdowne,

Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Fox; by petitions from several counties, and by repeated declarations from the city of London.—In appealing to the avowed opinions of men of established reputation, or of distinguished rank in their country, we do not mean to strengthen the reason, or enforce the necessity of the measure we propose, so much as to obviate all personal imputations, which the enemies of the cause will be ready to throw upon those who support it. It is not that, on our own account, we dread the effect, or regard the impression, which such imputations may produce; but we think it material to the credit and success of our proceedings, to shew that we are not aiming at reforms unthought of by wise and virtuous men: that our opinions neither possess the advantage, nor are liable to the objection of novelty; and that we cannot be accused or suspected of factious purposes or dangerous designs, without extending the same accusation or suspicion to the motives of men whose situation and property, independent of their character, principles, and abilities, have given them a most important stake in the peace and good government of the kingdom.

Convinced by our own reflections, by experience, and by authority, that the thing we propose to do is fit to be done, we have, with equal deliberation, weighed the reasons that may recommend or be objected to the present time, as the most or least proper for bringing it forward. On this point, we have no address to make to the determined enemies of a reform of every kind. Their objection, whether valid or not, is to the substance of the measure, and cannot be abated by circumstances. To those who concur generally in the principle, but who may be inclined, by particular reasons, to defer the attempt, we seriously wish to submit the following considerations:—That admitting this to be a season of general tranquillity in the country, it is, on that account, the more proper for temperate reflection and prudent exertions, to accomplish any necessary improvement; it is the time when practical measures for that purpose are most likely to be adopted with discretion, and pursued with moderation. If we are persuaded to wait for other times, of a different complexion, for times of public complaint, or general discontent, we shall then be told, that general remedies are not fit to be proposed in the moment of particular disorder, and

that it is our duty to wait for the return of quiet days, unless we mean to create or increase confusion in the country. The result of this dilemma, if it be suffered to prevail, is pure and absolute inactivity at present, and for ever. On the other hand, if it be true, as we are convinced it is, that, in this general appearance of tranquillity, there is some mixture of discontent, as well as of strong and well-grounded opinion, on the subject of abuses in the government and corruptions of the constitution, we wish it to be considered by men, whose judgment has been formed or enlightened by experience, and whose actions are most likely to be directed by prudence, whether, in taking proper measures to remove the cause and objects of such discontent of opinion, the choice of the time be not a material part of the measure; and whether the earliest time that can be taken, for preventing the increase of an existing evil, be not the safest and the best?

The example and situation of another kingdom, are held out to deter us from innovations of any kind. We say, that the reforms we have in view, are not innovations. Our intention is, not to change, but to restore; not to displace, but to re-instate the constitution upon its true principles and its original ground. In the conduct of persons most likely to reproach us with a spirit of innovation, we see a solid ground for retorting the imputation. Their professions of admiration of the beauty, and of zeal for the security of the constitution, appear to us too lavish to be sincere, especially when compared with those practical violations with which they suffer this beautiful system to be invaded, and to which they never refuse to give their concurrence. They will not innovate,—but they are no enemies to gradual decay; as if the changes insensibly produced by time, and nourished by neglect, were not in effect the most dangerous innovations. But what security have we, that the dispositions of such men are not something worse than passive? How are we assured that, in praising the constitution, their intention is not to adorn a victim which they wish to sacrifice, or to flatter the beauty they are endeavouring to corrupt? Let their intention be what it may, we answer their accusation in the words of one of the wisest of mankind:*

* Lord Bacon.

"That time is the greatest innovator; and if time, of course, alter things for the worse, and if wisdom and counsel shall not alter them for the better, what shall be the end?"

By the reform proposed by Lord Chatham*, he declared in the House of Lords, that he meant to *infuse a portion of new health into the constitution*. The Duke of Richmond has declared†, that "his reasons, in favour of a parliamentary reform were formed on the experience of twenty-six years; which, whether in or out of government, had equally convinced him, that the restoration of a genuine House of Commons, by a renovation of the rights of the people, was the only remedy against that system of corruption which had brought the nation to disgrace and poverty, and threatened it with the loss of liberty."

Other authorities in favour of a parliamentary reform, as direct and explicit as these, might be quoted in abundance. The public is possessed of them. We rather wish to encounter, because we are sure we can efface, in every rational mind, the impression, which may have been made by a view of those events which have attended a total change in the constitution of France. We deny the existence of any resemblance whatever between the cases of the two kingdoms; and we utterly disclaim the necessity of resorting to similar remedies.—We do not believe that, at this day, an absolute avowed despotism in the hands of the executive power, would be endured in this country. But who can say to what conclusion the silent unresisted operation of abuses, incessantly acting, and constantly increasing, may lead us hereafter! what habits it may gradually create! What power it may finally establish! The abuses in the government of France were suffered to gather and accumulate, until nothing but an eruption could put an end to them. The discontent of the people was converted into despair. Preventive remedies were either not thought of in time, or were not proposed until it was too late to apply them with effect. The subversion of the ancient government ensued. The inference from this comparison is at once so powerful and so obvious, that we know not by what argument to illustrate or enforce it. We mean to avert for ever from our country the calamities

inseparable from such convulsions. If there be, as it is said, in any part of this kingdom, a disposition to promote confusion, or even to arrive at improvement by unconstitutional and irregular courses, we hold ourselves as strictly pledged to resist that disposition, wherever it may appear, as to pursue our objects by unexceptionable methods. If, on the contrary, it be true that the mass of the people are satisfied with the present state of things, or indifferent about it; if they approve of the representation as it stands, the form of election, and the duration of the trust; or if, condemning these things, they are determined, from indolence or despair, not to attempt to correct them,—then indeed the efforts of individuals may be ineffectual, but they cannot be injurious to the peace of the community. If the spirit of the constitution be dead in the hearts of the people, no human industry can revive it.—To affirm that extensive mischief may be done by a statement of facts or arguments which make no general impression on the public mind, is a proposition that contradicts itself, and requires no other refutation. We trust it will be proved by experiment, that these inconsistent assertions are equally unfounded, and that the people of this country are no more disposed to submit to abuses without complaint, than to look for redress in any proceedings repugnant to the laws, or unwarranted by the constitution. Between anarchy and despotism, speaking for ourselves, we have no choice to make; we have no preference to give. We neither admit the necessity, nor can we endure the idea of resorting to either of these extremities as a refuge from the other. The course we are determined to pursue, is equally distant from both.

Finally, we assert, that it must be blindness not to see, and treachery not to acknowledge,

That "the instruments of power are not perhaps so open and avowed as they formerly were, and therefore are the less liable to jealous and invidious reflections; but they are not the weaker upon that account. In short, our national debts and taxes have, in their natural consequences, thrown such a weight of power into the executive scale of government, as we cannot think was intended by our patriot ancestors, who gloriously struggled for

* Jan. 22, 1770.

† Jan. 17, 1783.

• Blackstone.

the abolition of the then formidable parts of the prerogative, and by an unaccountable want of foresight, established this system in their stead." Our general object is to recover and preserve the true balance of the constitution.

These are the principles of our Association, and on our steady adherence to them, we look with just confidence to the approbation and support of the people in the prosecution of our object. A measure, so likely to be opposed by the united strength of various interests, can never succeed but by the declared and hearty concurrence of the nation.

Resolved unanimously, That a motion be made in the House of Commons, at an early period in the next session of parliament, for introducing a Parliamentary Reform.

Resolved unanimously, That Charles Grey, Esq. be requested to make, and the Hon. Thomas Erskine to second, the above motion.

Signed by the unanimous order of this Meeting.—W. H. LAMBTON, Chairman.

Authentic Copy of a Petition praying for a Reform in Parliament, presented to the House of Commons by Charles Grey, Esq. on Monday, 6th May, 1793; and signed only by the Members of the Society of the Friends of the People, associated for the Purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

Sheweth,

That by the form and spirit of the British constitution, the king is vested with the sole executive power.

That the House of Lords consists of lords spiritual and temporal, deriving their titles and consequence either from the crown, or from hereditary privileges.

That these two powers, if they acted without controul, would form either a despotic monarchy, or a dangerous oligarchy.

That the wisdom of our ancestors hath contrived, that these authorities may be rendered not only harmless, but beneficial, and be exercised for the security and happiness of the people.

That this security and happiness are to be looked for in the introduction of a third estate, distinct from, and a check upon the other two branches of the legis-

lature; created by, representing, and responsible to the people themselves.

That so much depending upon the preservation of this third estate, in such its constitutional purity and strength, your Petitioners are reasonably jealous of whatever may appear to vitiate the one, or to impair the other.

That at the present day the House of Commons does not fully and fairly represent the people of England, which, consistently with what your Petitioners conceive to be the principles of the constitution, they consider as a grievance, and therefore, with all becoming respect, lay their complaints before your honourable House.

That though the terms in which your petitioners state their grievance may be looked upon as strong, yet your honourable House is intreated to believe that no expression is made use of for the purpose of offence.

Your Petitioners in affirming that your honourable House is not an adequate representation of the people of England, do but state a fact, which, if the word "Representation" be accepted in its fair and obvious sense, they are ready to prove, and which they think detrimental to their interests, and contrary to the spirit of the constitution.

How far this inadequate representation is prejudicial to their interests, your Petitioners apprehend they may be allowed to decide for themselves; but how far it is contrary to the spirit of the constitution, they refer to the consideration of your honourable House.

If your honourable House shall be pleased to determine that the people of England ought not to be fully represented, your petitioners pray that such your determination may be made known, to the end that the people may be apprized of their real situation; but if your honourable House shall conceive that the people are already fully represented, then your petitioners beg leave to call your attention to the following facts:

Your Petitioners complain, that the number of representatives assigned to the different counties is grossly disproportioned to their comparative extent, population, and trade.

Your Petitioners complain, that the elective franchise is so partially and unequally distributed, and is in so many instances committed to bodies of men of such very limited numbers, that the ma-

majority of your honourable House is elected by less than fifteen thousand electors, which, even if the male adults in the kingdom be estimated at so low a number as three millions, is not more than the two hundredth part of the people to be represented.

Your Petitioners complain, that the right of voting is regulated by no uniform or rational principle.

Your Petitioners complain, that the exercise of the elective franchise is only renewed once in seven years.

Your Petitioners thus distinctly state the subject matter of their complaints, that your honourable House may be convinced that they are acting from no spirit of general discontent, and that you may with the more ease be enabled to enquire into the facts, and to apply the remedy.

For the evidence in support of the first complaint, your Petitioners refer to the return book of your honourable House.—Is it fitting, that Rutland and Yorkshire should bear an equal rank in the scale of county representation; or can it be right, that Cornwall alone should, by its extravagant proportion of Borough members, outnumber not only the representatives of Yorkshire and Rutland together, but of Middlesex added to them? Or, if a distinction be taken between the landed and the trading interests, must it not appear monstrous that Cornwall and Wiltshire should send more borough members to parliament, than Yorkshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire, Middlesex, Worcestershire and Somersetshire united? and that the total representation of all Scotland should but exceed by one member, the number returned for a single county in England?

The second complaint of your Petitioners is founded on the unequal proportions in which the elective franchise is distributed, and in support of it,

They affirm, that seventy of your honourable members are returned by thirty five places, where the right of voting is vested in burgage and other tenures of a similar description, and in which it would be to trifle with the patience of your honourable House, to mention any number of voters whatever, the elections at the places alluded to being notoriously a mere matter of form. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm that in addition to the seventy honourable members so chosen, ninety more of your honourable members are elected by forty-six places, in

none of which the number of voters exceeds fifty. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and sixty so elected, thirty-seven more of your honourable members are elected by nineteen places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds one hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and ninety-seven honourable members so chosen, fifty-two more are returned to serve in parliament, by twenty-six places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds two hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and forty-nine so elected, twenty more are returned to serve in parliament for counties in Scotland by less than one hundred electors each, and ten for counties in Scotland by less than two hundred and fifty each. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove, even admitting the validity of fictitious votes.

They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and seventy-nine so elected, thirteen districts of burghs in Scotland, not containing one hundred voters each, and two districts of burghs, not containing one hundred and twenty-five each, return fifteen more honourable members. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

And in this manner, according to the present state of the representation, two hundred and nine-four of your honourable members are chosen, and, being a majority of the entire House of Commons, are enabled to decide all questions in the name of the whole people of England and Scotland.

The third complaint of your Petitioners is founded on the present complicated rights of voting. From the caprice with which they have been varied, and the obscurity in which they have become involved by time and contradictory decisions, they are become a source of infinite confusion, litigation, and expence.

Your Petitioners need not tender any evidence of the inconveniences which arise from this defect in the representation, because the proof is to be found in your journals, and the minutes of the different committees who have been appointed under the 10th and 11th of the king. Your honourable House is but too well acquainted with the tedious, intricate, and expensive scenes of litigation which have

been brought before you, in attempting to settle the legal import of those numerous distinctions which perplex and confound the present rights of voting. How many months of your valuable time have been wasted in listening to the wrangling of lawyers upon the various species of burgagehold, leasehold, and freehold! How many committees have been occupied in investigating the nature of scot and lot, pot wallers, commonalty, populacy, resistant inhabitants, and inhabitants at large! What labour and research have been employed in endeavouring to ascertain the legal claims of borough-men, aldermen, port men, select men, burgesses, and council-men! And what confusion has arisen from the complicated operation of clashing charters, from freemen resident and non resident, and from the different modes of obtaining the freedom of corporations by birth, by servitude, by marriage, by redemption, by election, and by purchase! On all these points it is however needless for your Petitioners to enlarge, when your honourable House recollects the following facts; namely, that since the twenty-second of December 1790, no less than twenty-one committees have been employed in deciding upon litigated rights of voting. Of these, eight were occupied with the disputes of three boroughs, and there are petitions from four places yet remaining before your honourable House, waiting for a final decision to inform the electors what their rights really are.

But the complaint of your Petitioners on the subject of the want of an uniform and equitable principle in regulating the right of voting, extends as well to the arbitrary manner in which some are excluded, as to the intricate qualifications by which others are admitted to the exercise of that privilege.

Religious opinions create an incapacity to vote. All Papists are excluded generally, and, by the operation of the test laws, Protestant Dissenters are deprived of a voice in the election of representatives in about thirty boroughs, where the right of voting is confined to corporate officers alone; a deprivation the more unjustifiable, because, though considered as unworthy to vote, they are deemed capable of being elected, and may be the representatives of the very places for which they are disqualified from being the electors.

A man possessed of one thousand pounds

per annum, or any other sum, arising from copyhold, leasehold for ninety-nine years, trade, property in the public funds, or even freehold in the city of London, and many other cities and towns having peculiar jurisdictions, is not thereby intitled to vote. Here again a strange distinction is taken between electing and representing, as a copyhold is a sufficient qualification to sit in your honourable House.

A man paying taxes to any amount, how great soever, for his domestic establishment, does not thereby obtain a right to vote, unless his residence be in some borough where that right is vested in the inhabitants. This exception operates in sixty places, of which twenty-eight do not contain three hundred voters each, and the number of householders in England and Wales (exclusive of Scotland), who pay all taxes, is 714,911, and of householders who pay all taxes, but the house and window taxes, is 284,459, as appears by a return made to your honourable House in 1785; so that even supposing the sixty places above mentioned to contain, one with another, one thousand voters in each, there will remain 939,370 householders who have no voice in the representation, unless they have obtained it by accident or by purchase. Neither their contributions to the public burdens, their peaceable demeanor as good subjects, nor their general respectability and merits as useful citizens, afford them, as the law now stands, the smallest pretensions to participate in the choice of those, who, under the name of their representatives, may dispose of their fortunes and liberties.

In Scotland, the grievance arising from the nature of the rights of voting, has a different and still more intolerable operation. In that great and populous division of the kingdom, not only the great mass of the householders, but of the landholders also, are excluded from all participation in the choice of representatives. By the remains of the feudal system in the counties, the vote is severed from the land, and attached to what is called the superiority. In other words it is taken from the substance, and transferred to the shadow, because, though each of these superiorities must, with very few exceptions, arise from lands of the present annual value of four hundred pounds sterling, yet it is not necessary that the lands should do no more than give a name to the superiority, the possessor of which

may retain the right of voting notwithstanding he be divested of the property. And on the other hand, great landholders have the means afforded them by the same system, of adding to their influence, without expence to themselves, by communicating to their confidential friends the privilege of electing members to serve in parliament. The process by which this operation is performed is simple. He who wishes to increase the number of his dependent votes, surrenders his charter to the crown, and, parcelling out his estate into as many lots of four hundred pounds per annum, as may be convenient, conveys them to such as he can confide in. To these, new charters are, upon application, granted by the crown, so as to erect each of them into a superiority, which privilege once obtained, the land itself is reconveyed to the original granter; and thus the representatives of the landed interest in Scotland may be chosen by those who have no real or beneficial interest in the land.

Such is the situation in which the counties of Scotland are placed. With respect to the burghs, every thing that bears even the semblance of popular choice, has long been done away. The election of members to serve in Parliament is vested in the magistrates and town councils, who, having by various innovations, constituted themselves into self-elected bodies, instead of officers freely chosen by the inhabitants at large, have deprived the people of all participation in that privilege, the free exercise of which affords the only security they can possess for the protection of their liberties and property.

The fourth and last complaint of your Petitioners is the length of the duration of Parliament. Your honourable House knows, that by the ancient laws and statutes of this kingdom frequent parliaments ought to be held; and that the sixth of William and Mary, c. 2. (since repealed) speaking while the spirit of the revolution was yet warm, declared, that "frequent and new parliaments tend very much to the happy union and good agreement between king and people;" and enacted, that no parliament should last longer than three years. Your Petitioners, without presuming to add to such an authority by any observations of their own, humbly pray that parliaments may not be continued for seven years.

Your Petitioners have thus laid before

you the specific grounds of complaint, from which they conceive every evil in the representation to spring, and on which they think every abuse and inconvenience is founded.

What those abuses are, and how great that inconvenience is, it becomes your Petitioners to state, as the best means of justifying their present application to your honourable House.

Your Petitioners then affirm, that from the combined operation of the defects they have pointed out, arise those scenes of confusion, litigation, and expence, which so disgrace the name, and that extensive system of private patronage which is so repugnant to the spirit of free representation.

Your Petitioners entreat of your honourable House to consider the manner in which elections are conducted, and to reflect upon the extreme inconvenience to which electors are exposed, and the intolerable expence to which candidates are subjected.

Your honourable House knows that tumults, disorders, outrages, and perjury, are too often the dreadful attendants on contested elections as at this time carried on.

Your honourable House knows that polls are only taken in one fixed place for each county, city, and borough, whether the number of voters be ten or ten thousand, and whether they be resident or dispersed over England.

Your honourable House knows that polls, however few the electors, may by law be continued for fifteen days, and even then be subjected to a scrutiny.

Your honourable House knows that the management and conduct of polls is committed to returning officers, who, from the very nature of the proceedings, must be invested with extensive and discretionary powers, and who, it appears by every volume of your journals, have but too often exercised those powers with the most gross partiality, and the most scandalous corruption.

Of elections arranged with such little regard to the accommodation of the parties, acknowledged to require such a length of time to complete, and trusted to the superintendence of such suspicious agents, your Petitioners might easily draw out a detail of the expence. But it is unnecessary. The fact is too notorious to require proof, that scarce an instance can be produced where a member has

obtained a disputed seat in parliament at a less cost than from two to five thousand pounds; particular cases are not wanting where ten times these sums have been paid, but it is sufficient for your Petitioners to affirm, and to be able to prove it if denied, that such is the expence of a contested return, that he who should become a candidate with even greater funds than the laws require him to swear to as his qualification to sit in your honourable House, must either relinquish his pretensions on the appearance of opposition, or so reduce his fortune in the contest, that he could not take his seat without perjury.

The revision of the original polls before the committees of your honourable House, upon appeals from the decisions of the returning officers, affords a fresh source of vexation and expence to all parties. Your honourable House knows, that the complicated rights of voting, and the shameful practices which disgrace election proceedings, have so loaded your table with Petitions for judgment and redress, that one half of the usual duration of a parliament has scarcely been sufficient to settle who is entitled to sit for the other half; and it was not till within the last two months that your honourable House had an opportunity of discovering, that the two gentlemen, who sat and voted near three years as the representatives of the borough of Stockbridge, had procured themselves to be elected by the most scandalous bribery; and that the two gentlemen, who sat and voted during as long a period for the borough of Great Grimsby, had not been elected at all.

In truth all the mischiefs of the present system of representation are ascertained by the difficulties which even the zeal and wisdom of your honourable House experiences in attending to the variety of complaints brought before you. Though your committee sit five hours every day from the time of their appointment, they generally are unable to come to a decision in less than a fortnight, and very frequently are detained from thirty to forty days. The Westminster case in 1789, will even furnish your honourable House with an instance, where, after deliberating forty-five days, a committee gravely resolved, that, "From an attentive consideration of the circumstances relating to the cause, a final decision of the business before them could not take place in the course of the session, and that not

improbably the whole of the parliament" (having at that time near two years longer to sit) "might be consumed in a tedious and expensive litigation;" and they recommended it to the Petitioners to withdraw their Petition, which, after a fruitless perseverance of above three months, they were actually obliged to submit to.

Your Petitioners will only upon this subject farther add; that the expence to each of the parties, who have been either plaintiff or defendant in Petitions tried before your honourable House in the present session, has, upon an average, amounted to above one hundred pounds per day; and that the Attornies' Bills in one cause, the trial of which in point of form only lasted two days, and in point of fact only six hours, amounted to very near twelve hundred pounds. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

Your Petitioners must now beg leave to call the attention of your honourable House to the greatest evil produced by these defects in the representation of which they complain, namely, the extent of PRIVATE PARLIAMENTARY PATRONAGE; an abuse which obviously tends to exclude the great mass of the people from any substantial influence in the election of the House of Commons, and which in its progress, threatens to usurp the sovereignty of the country, to the equal danger of the king; of the lords, and of the commons.

The patronage of which your Petitioners complain, is of two kinds: *That* which arises from the unequal distribution of the elective franchise, and the peculiar rights of voting by which certain places return members to serve in parliaments; and *that* which arises from the expence attending contested elections, and the consequent degree of power acquired by wealth.

By these two means, a weight of parliamentary influence has been obtained by certain individuals, forbidden by the spirit of the laws, and in its consequences most dangerous to the liberties of the people of Great Britain.

The operation of the *first* species of patronage is direct, and subject to positive proof. Eighty-four individuals do by their own immediate authority send one hundred and fifty-seven of your honourable members to parliament. And this your Petitioners are ready, if the fact be disputed, to prove, and to name the members and the patrons.

The *second* species of patronage cannot be shewn with equal accuracy, though it is felt with equal force.

Your Petitioners are convinced, that in addition to the one hundred and fifty-seven honourable members above mentioned, one hundred and fifty more, making in the whole three hundred and seven, are returned to your honourable House, not by the collective voice of those whom they appear to represent, but by the recommendation of seventy powerful individuals, added to the eighty-four before mentioned, and making the total number of patrons altogether only one hundred and fifty-four, who return a decided majority of your honourable House.

If your honourable House will accept as evidence the common report and general belief of the counties, cities, and boroughs, which return the members alluded to, your Petitioners are ready to name them, and to prove the fact; or if the members in question can be made parties to the inquiry, your Petitioners will name them, and be governed by the testimony which they themselves shall publicly give. But if neither of these proofs be thought consistent with the proceedings of your honourable House, then your Petitioners can only assert their belief of the fact, which they hereby do in the most solemn manner, and on the most deliberate conviction.

Your Petitioners entreat your honourable House to believe that, in complaining of this species of influence, it is not their intention or desire to decry or to condemn that just and natural attachment which they, who are enabled by their fortune, and inclined by their disposition, to apply great means to honourable and benevolent ends, will always ensure to themselves. What your Petitioners complain of is, that property, whether well or ill employed, has equal power; that the present system of representation gives to it a degree of weight which renders it independent of character; which enables it to excite fear as well as to procure respect, and which confines the choice of electors, within the ranks of opulence, because, though it cannot make riches the sole object of their affection and confidence, it can and does throw obstacles, almost insurmountable, in the way of every man who is not rich, and thereby secures to a select few the capability of becoming candidates themselves, or supporting the pretensions of others. Of this your Pe-

titioners complain loudly, because they conceive it to be highly unjust, that while the language of the law requires from a candidate no greater estate, as a qualification, than a few hundred pounds per annum, the operation of the law should disqualify every man whose rental is not extended to thousands; and that, at the same time that the legislature appears to give the electors a choice from amongst those who possess a moderate and independent competence, it should virtually compel them to choose from amongst those who themselves abound in wealth, or are supported by the wealth of others.

Your Petitioners are the more alarmed at the progress of private patronage, because it is rapidly leading to consequences which menace the very existence of the constitution.

At the commencement of every session of parliament, your honourable House, acting up to the laudable jealousy of your predecessors, and speaking the pure, constitutional language of a British House of Commons resolve, as appears by your journals, "That no peer of this realm hath any right to give his vote in the election of any member to serve in parliament;" and also, "That it is a high infringement upon the liberties and privileges of the Commons of Great Britain, for any Lord of Parliament, or any lord-lieutenant of any county, to concern themselves in the elections of members to serve for the Commons in Parliament."

Your Petitioners inform your honourable House, and are ready to prove it at your bar, that they have the most reasonable grounds to suspect that no less than one hundred and fifty of your honourable members owe their elections entirely to the interference of Peers; and your Petitioners are prepared to shew by legal evidence, that forty Peers, in defiance of your resolutions, have possessed themselves of so many burgage tenures, and obtained such an absolute and uncontrolled command in very many small boroughs in the kingdom, as to be enabled by their own positive authority to return eighty-one of your honourable members.

Your petitioners will, however, urge this grievance of the interference of peers in elections no farther, because they are satisfied that it is unnecessary. Numbers of your honourable members must individually have known the fact, but collectively your honourable house has un-

doubtedly been a stranger to it. It is now brought before you by those who tender evidence of the truth of what they assert, and they conceive it would be improper in them to ask that by petition, which must be looked for as the certain result of your own honourable attachment to your own liberties and privileges.

Your petitioners have thus laid before your honourable house, what the mischiefs are which arise from the present state of the representation, and what they conceive to be the grounds of those mischiefs, and therefore pray to have removed.

They now humbly beg leave to offer their reasons, why they are anxious that some remedy should be immediately applied.

Your petitioners trust they may be allowed to state, because they are ready to prove, that seats in your honourable house are sought for at a most extravagant and increasing rate of expence.

What can have so much augmented the ambition to sit in your honourable house, your petitioners do not presume accurately to have discovered, but the means taken by candidates to obtain, and by electors to bestow that honour, evidently appear to have been increasing in a progressive degree of fraud and corruption. Your petitioners are induced to make this assertion by the legislature having found it necessary, during the last and present reigns so much to swell the statute book with laws for the prevention of those offences.

As far as conjecture can lead your petitioners, they must suppose, that the increasing national debt, and the consequent increase of influence, are the causes of the increased eagerness of individuals to become members of the House of Commons, and of their indifference as to the means used to gratify their speculations. To prove that they do not state this wantonly, or without substantial grounds, they humbly beg to call your attention to the following table, all the vouchers for which are to be found in the journals of your honourable house, or in different acts of parliament.

It is upon this evidence of the increase of taxes, establishments and influence, and the increase of laws found necessary to repel the increasing attacks upon the purity and freedom of elections, that your petitioners conceive it high time to inquire into the premises.

Your petitioners are confident that in

what they have stated, they are supported by the evidence of facts, and they trust that, in conveying those facts to your honourable house, they have not been betrayed into the language of reproach or disrespect. Anxious to preserve in its purity a constitution they love and admire, they have thought it their duty to lay before you, not general speculations deduce from theoretical opinions, but positive truths susceptible of direct proof, and if in the performance of this task, they have been obliged to call your attention to assertions which you have not been accustomed to hear, and which they lament that they are compelled to make, they intreat the indulgence of your honourable house.

Your petitioners will only further trespass upon your time, while they recapitulate the objects of their prayer, which are,

That your honourable House will be pleased to take such measures, as to your wisdom may seem meet, to remove the evils arising from the unequal manner in which the different parts of the kingdom are admitted to participate in the representation.

To correct the partial distribution of the elective franchise, which commits the choice of representatives to select bodies of men of such limited numbers as renders them an easy prey to the artful, or a ready purchase to the wealthy.

To regulate the right of voting upon an uniform and equitable principle.

And finally to shorten the duration of parliaments, and by removing the causes of that confusion, litigation and expence, with which they are at this day conducted, to render frequent and new elections, what our ancestors at the revolution asserted them to be, the means of a happy union and good agreement between the king and people.

And your petitioners shall ever pray.

DISSENTERS' MEETING.

(Concluded from page 1376.)

Resolved, That the cordial thanks of this Deputation be given to the Committee, for the zeal and promptitude which they have so long and so constantly manifested, in the protection of the civil rights of Protestant Dissenters, both in the metropolis and in the country, from every part of which, applications on the subject have been so frequently received; for their watchful and anxious regard to these im-

portant interests ever since Lord Sidmouth announced his intention respecting the Toleration Act; and especially for the unshaken firmness with which they have maintained the inalienable rights of conscience, and deprecated the interference of magistrates in matters of religion, as a violation of those sacred principles, which (in their judgment) human laws ought never to control.

Resolved, That the foregoing Resolutions be signed by the Chairman, and inserted in all the morning papers.

W. SMITH, Chairman.

Resolved, That William Smith, Esq. M. P. the Chairman of this Deputation, be desired to accept our warmest thanks for his vigilant attention to the subject of the late measure, ever since it was first announced in Parliament; for his ready and obliging communications with the Committee in their attempts to dissuade the noble author from actually bringing the same forward; and for his able and active assistance in obtaining its rejection; and that this Deputation entertains a strong and grateful sense of his constant and zealous support of civil and religious liberty, and of the rights of Protestant Dissenters on all occasions.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Resolutions of the Livery of London, passed 30th May, 1811.—SMITH, MAYOR.

At a Meeting, or Assembly, of the Mayor, Aldermen, and Liverymen, of the several Companies of the City of London, in Common Hall assembled, at the Guildhall of the said City, on Thursday, the 30th day of May, 1811:—

Resolved,—That the Livery of London have, for the last 40 years, felt and declared the corrupt and inadequate state of the Representation of the People in Parliament to be the great source of all our national grievances and misfortunes.

That to this cause alone can be ascribed the unjust and unfortunate war with America, at the close of which they declared in Common Hall, “that our excellent Constitution appeared in no circumstances more grievously defaced than in the unequal Representation of the People in Parliament, which continual experience had proved to be no less productive of cala-

mities to this country, than depredatory to the rights of Englishmen.”

That the subsequent enormous increase of debt and taxes, the increased and increasing corruptions and abuses of the State, and all our grievances and misfortunes, arise from the same cause, and convince us that a Constitutional Reformation can no longer with safety be delayed.

That we concur in opinion with the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, “That England can never be ruined but by a Parliament.”

That we agree with that enlightened Philosopher, Statesman, and Christian, Locke, “That employing the force, treasure, and offices of the Government to corrupt the Electors, is to cut up the Government by the roots, and poison the very fountain of public security.”

That we agree with that great Lawyer, Patriot, and Statesman, Lord Somers, “That it belongeth to our Parliaments, as being one of the great ends as well as reason for which they ought to be frequently called and assembled, to enquire into and punish the crimes of Judges and all others employed by and under the King in the executive part of the Government, from whence it is, as the House of Commons, among other capacities in which they sit and act, are by the Constitution to be the great inquest of the kingdom, to search into all the oppressions and injustices of the King’s Ministers; so the House of Lords among their several other rights and privileges, stand clothed with the power and authority of the High-Court of Judicature of the nation to punish those who have misbehaved themselves in all Courts.

That we agree with Baron Montesquieu, “That the English Constitution will perish whenever the Representative Power is more corrupted than the Executive.”

That we agree with the great Earl of Chatham, “That Parliament must reform itself from within, or it will be reformed from without with a vengeance.”

That we agree with that venerable Statesman and Lawyer Lord Camden, “That Taxation, without Representation, is tyranny.”

That we agree with Judge Blackstone, “That if any change were to be desired, it was in favour of a more equal Representation of the People in Parliament.”

(To be continued.)